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(eds.)

The language of education policy

Implementation, practice and learning outcomes
in Zambia, Namibia and Norway

Høgskolen i Hedmark
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Summary: <p>In this present document we present the findings of a pilot study conducted in all three countries during August and September 2011. The aim was to enhance the information basis and therefore we opted to do an explorative case study. The study focused on a few multilingual schools in each country. The intention was to broadly explore the language of instruction situation and possible challenges in each of the sampled schools. More specific the main objective was an exploration of the different language policies of education: Implementation, practise and learning outcomes in Zambia, Namibia and Norway.</p> <p>The language policy differs substantially between the three countries. In Zambia the language of instruction is English from grade 1. However, since the new education act in 1996 the language for initial literacy is one of seven official Zambian languages. The latter is offered only for initial literacy during the daily literacy hour. The rest of the subjects in schools are taught in English throughout the education system. In Norway there is a different language policy for immigrant minorities and for indigenous population, the Sami people. The latter has Sami as language of instruction and as language for initial literacy in primary and lower secondary schools. For immigrant minorities Norwegian is the language of instruction and also the language of initial literacy. However, they are entitled to special tuition and some mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject instruction or both. In Namibia the language of instruction and language of initial literacy is mother tongue at the lower primary level. English is the official language; and it is introduced as a subject in lower primary. Grade 4 is seen as a transitional year after which English is the medium of instruction for all subjects.</p> <p>Even though the language policies differ some of the challenges are the same. The main problems are that learners cannot read, talk or comprehend the official language on an acceptable level and many learners are functionally illiterate. Two fundamental questions might be asked: Is it the language policy that is wrong or is it the implementation of the language policy that is imperfect?</p>			



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Sammendrag: <p>I denne rapporten presenterer vi resultatene fra en pilotstudie gjennomført i Zambia, Namibia og Norge i løpet av august og september 2011. Vi har gjennomført en eksplorerende kasusstudie. Studien fokuserte på noen flerspråklige skoler i hvert land. Hensikten var utforske språksituasjon og mulige utfordringer knyttet til opplæringsspråk i hvert av de undersøkte skolene. Hovedmålet var å studere gjennomføring, praksis og læringsutbytte i Zambia, Namibia og Norge og se på de i forhold til den nasjonale språkpolitikken.</p> <p>Språkpolitikken skiller seg vesentlig mellom de tre landene. I Zambia er undervisningsspråket engelsk fra 1. trinn. Men siden den nye opplæringsloven kom i 1996 er språket for begynnende leseopplæring et av syv offisielle zambiske språk. Resten av fagene i skolen blir undervist på engelsk i hele utdanningssystemet. I Norge er det ulik språkpolitikk for immigranter og for urfolk, samene. Sistnevnte har samisk som undervisningsspråk og som språk for begynnende leseopplæring i barne- og ungdomsskolen. For immigranter er norsk undervisningsspråk et. De har imidlertid rett til særskilt norskopplæring og noen morsmålsopplæring, tospråklig fagopplæring instruksjon eller begge deler. I Namibia er undervisningsspråket og språket som brukes til begynnende leseopplæring morsmålet til elevene i de første skoleårene. Engelsk er det offisielle språket, og det er innført som fag i småskolen. Fra fjerde skoleår er engelsk undervisningsspråk i alle fag.</p> <p>Selv om språkpolitikk er forskjellig i de tre landene er mange av utfordringene de samme. Det viktigste problemet som går igjen er at mange elever ikke kan lese, snakke eller forstå det offisielle språket på et akseptabelt nivå, og mange elever er funksjonelt analfabeter. To grunnleggende spørsmål kan stilles: Er det språkpolitikken som er galt eller er det gjennomføringen av språkpolitikken som er ufullkommen?</p>			

Foreword

The present report is a result of a joint pilot research programme between the School of Education, University of Zambia, Faculty of Education, University of Namibia and Faculty of Education and Social Science, Hedmark University College.

From the University of Zambia the following researchers have contributed: Dr Banda, D., Mr Chakanika, B. W., Dr Cheyeka, O., Dr Luangala, J., Dr Manchishi, C., Dr Matafwali, B., Dr Musaka, E., Dr Mwansa, J. B. W., Mr. Nkosha, C., Dr Simwinga, J., Mr Tambulukani, J.

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From Hedmark University College the following researchers have contributed: Prof Danbolt, A.M., Prof. Kulbrandstad, L.A., Prof Wikan, G.

Thank you to all for the valuable contribution to this report.

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Hamar: 31 May 2012

Gerd Wikan.

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Introduction

Researchers from University of Zambia (UNZA), University of Namibia (UNAM) and Hedmark University College (HUC), Norway worked together for the last four years. We developed and ran a Master's programme in Literacy and Learning at both UNZA and UNAM. This programme was very successful. It produced a number of Master's degrees and was also very helpful in capacity building at all three universities. As a result of this cooperation we thought we would like to get a better understanding of the challenges related to the implementation of the national language policies in the three countries participating in the programme.

In this present document we present the findings of a pilot study conducted in all three countries during August and September 2011. The aim was to enhance the information basis and therefore we opted to do an explorative case study. The study focused on a few multilingual schools in each country. The intention was to broadly explore the language of instruction situation and possible challenges in each of the sampled schools. More specific the main objective was an exploration of the different language policies of education: Implementation, practise and learning outcomes in Zambia, Namibia and Norway.

It is expected that this pilot study will disclose information that will guide us when designing a full scale comparative research project.

Language Policies

In this section we give a brief overview of the national language policy and challenges in Zambia, Norway and Namibia.

Language Policy in Zambia

The legacy of the language policy

Zambia has had no clear and sustainable language policy since pre-colonial days. The gaining of independence in 1964 has not changed much in this area. Talking about supporting the indigenous Zambian languages, one would argue that the colonial government's language policy was more favourable to the use of indigenous Zambian languages than the policy followed in the post-independent era. Since Independence, the policy on language has been somehow experimental (Muyeba, 1998; Banda, 2002).

The colonial government set the commission in 1924, with the aim to review the education in the colonies. Following its recommendations, the Advisory Board on native Education agreed to adopt four (4) principal native languages: Sikololo (Silozi) for Barotseland (now Western province); Chitonga-Chiila for North-Western Rhodesia; Chibemba for North Eastern Rhodesia and west of the Luangwa River and Chinyanja for North Eastern Rhodesia and east of Luangwa River (Ohannessia, 1978).

In 1930, the same board made a decision that the teaching of English could begin in schools «as soon as the mechanical difficulties of Reading and Writing in the vernacular had been mastered» (Ohannessia, 1978:12). Throughout the colonial period, mother tongue was used for the first two years of primary school, then a dominant vernacular was used up to Standard Five (5) (now Grade 5), and English thereafter. Table 1 gives an overview of the Pre-independence language policy in education.

Table 1: Pre-independence language policy in education.

Year 1 of primary school	Year 2 of primary school	Year 3 of primary school	Year 4 of primary school	Year 5 of primary school	Later years of primary school	Secondary school
Vernacular as the language for initial literacy and language for instruction	Vernacular as the language for initial literacy and language for instruction	Dominant vernacular as the language for initial literacy and language for instruction	Dominant vernacular as the language for initial literacy and language for instruction	Dominant vernacular as the language for initial literacy and language for instruction	English taught as a subject and a dominant vernacular as language for instruction	English used as the language for instruction

In 1961 this policy was re-considered in the Northern Rhodesia Legislative Council after one member of parliament moved a motion that English should be the main teaching medium in African schools from standard one (now Grade 3) onwards. In response, the then Minister of African Education stated that the ideal medium of instruction in the first 4 years of primary school is the mother tongue, while the main African languages of the Territory, in this case the four languages mentioned above (Citonga-chila, Chinyanja, Chibemba, Silozi) would continue to be used as media of instruction (Ohannessia, 1978:12). Following the UNESCO sponsored commission, led by Dr Radford, the newly independent Zambia introduced English, in 1965, as Language of Instruction (LOI) in all schools from Grade One, though it allowed for continued use of the Zambian languages mediums of instructions for Grade 1–4 in all «unscheduled» schools. This was finally incorporated into the 1966 Education Act. This is the act, which according to Kelly (2000), Kashoki (1990) and Muyeba (1998), just «schooled» illiterates graduated from primary schools because initial literacy was done in English, a language completely alien to most pupils.

After realising that the 1966 language policy was leading the education system into problems, the drafters of the revised Reform document re-stated in their submission to the Ministry of Education:

In the first 4 Grades of primary school, the 7 official Zambian languages will be the LOI but the teachers will be encouraged to use any other language familiar to the child for purposes of communication and better teaching and learning (Agreed Draft 11th May 1977: 9)

However, when the final document was published in 1977, it contained a complete reversal of this proposed policy. The reforms acknowledged that:

It is generally accepted by educationists that learning is best done in the mother tongue. This situation is found to be impracticable in the case of every child in multi-lingual societies, such as Zambian society. (MoE, 1996:22).

This, however, is the latest policy in Zambia and it comes as a result of serious questions that arose as to the focus and relevance of the curriculum at all levels. Grade 1–4 failed to exhibit expected basic reading, writing and numeric skills. The policy that is officially known as «Educating Our Future» takes note of the problem of LOI and it has this to say:

For over 30 years, (i.e. since the 1966 policy) children who have very little contact with English outside school, but have been required to learn concepts through English medium have had unsatisfactory experience (MoE, 1996:39)

The 1996 policy further states that:

The fact that initial reading skills are taught in and through a language that is unfamiliar to the majority of children is believed to be a major contributory factor to the backwardness in reading shown by many Zambian children. It is also a major factor in fostering rote learning. Since from the outset the child has difficulties in associating the printed forms of words with their real, underlying meaning (MoE, 1996:39)

Muyeba (1998) says that the 1996 policy from the surface is very concerned with the falling standard of education in our schools, which have been brought about by a wrong medium of instruction. In one other paragraph the policy agrees with the general opinion that:

There is strong evidence that children learn literacy skills more easily and successfully through their mother tongue and subsequently they are able to transfer these skills quickly and with ease to English or another language. Successful first language learning is, in fact, believed to be essential for successful literacy in the second language (MoE, 1996:39).

This statement does not only support the use of MT in the initial literacy acquisition but also emphasizes a successful learning of MT. This is to enable a successful transfer of skills from MT learning to second language learning. This, therefore, may suggest that any initial literacy programme to succeed, the language policy followed must support it.

The Language Policy and the Primary Reading Programme (PRP)

Muyeba (1998) points out that the 1996 language policy which had wanted to correct the confusion brought about by the erroneous 1966 policy makes a complete «about turn» by stating the following:

It must be born in mind that the introduction of a language other than English as the official medium of instruction would encounter insoluble implementation problems and would entail enormous costs born in developing and producing materials and in training teachers to use them, (MoE, 1996:39).

Kashoki (1990), Mwendende, (1997) and Brock-Utne (2000) refute the arguments of cost, if the LOI would be changed from English to the MT, for example, any of the seven official Zambian languages. These researchers argue that it would be cheaper to spend more money in providing meaningful education in the local languages than «save» funds by continually providing education through the medium of English.

Zambia piloted and later took to scale a reading programme called the Primary Reading Programme (PRP). PRP was designed to use mother tongue as language for initial literacy. The PRP is seen here as a programme that would benefit a lot from a language policy that would take into consideration the use of MT as a LOI in the early childhood education, perhaps even up to Grade 4, like the situation is in many neighbouring countries as stated in chapter one of this study.

However, there is a mismatch between the PRP and the 1996 language policy, for example. Children get confused cognitively. You cannot expect to achieve a meaningful initial literacy programme through local languages while a foreign language remains in control as the language of learning and teaching at the same level. We can argue that one of the two languages would eventually stand in the way of the other, and thus cause confusion.

The mismatch is also seen in the running of the pre-schools. In Zambia, Pre-schools are organised forms of educational provision for children between the ages of three and six. According to the 1996 policy document (*Educating Our Future*, 1996:8) «the provision and funding of early childhood and pre-school education will be the responsibility of Councils, local communities, non-governmental organizations, private individuals and families». Most of these pre-schools, run by individuals, use English as LOI and focus much on the teaching of oral English to pupils who will learn initial literacy in Mother tongues and not English when they start Grade 1. Below is a table showing the post-independence language policy in education in Zambia.

It must be noted that the language of instruction should not be confused with language for initial literacy. The former has not changed as stated in the 1966 Education Act, just as the Education Act has not changed since then. The latter is only for initial literacy and in the literacy hour only. The rest of the subjects in schools are taught in English throughout the education system. Table 2 gives an overview of Post-Independence language policy in education.

Table 2: Post-Independence language policy in education.

	Nursery School Education	Primary School Education	Secondary School Education	Tertiary Education
Language of Instruction (LoI) in Education	English	English	English	English
Language for Initial Literacy in English and Zambian languages (Grade 1-2)	Not clear but they do more activities in English e.g. learning the English alphabet	One of the seven official Zambia languages (grades 1-2) only for the literacy hour	N/A	N/A
Literacy hour		One of the seven official Zambian languages and English (grades 3-7)	Extensive reading lessons are only in English	N/A

For a long time, especially after the inclusion of the Primary Reading Programme (PRP), there were calls from various stakeholders in education to change the medium of instruction in primary schools from English to Zambia languages, as proposed in various education reforms discussed above. However, there is a need to guard against an over-simplified and misguided assumption that merely changing the medium of instruction from English to an African language would improve the quality of education. Without proper training of teachers to teach in African languages, this may not happen. Joint research is needed to look into various variables that play a part and a focus on the training of teachers could be cardinal in this area. The following are possible research topics that can be considered for a possible joint research work in the order of preference:

- The training of teachers in these Zambian languages
- The use of effective and innovative teaching methods in these Zambian languages using various teaching aids as the case is with the teaching of English and French languages.
- The standardization of the orthographies of the various Zambian languages used for initial literacy in various regions where so many dialects are used by learners. Some of the so-called dialects are, in fact, children's mother tongues. This could be mainstreamed in the teacher training curriculum.
- Production of multilingual dictionaries to enhance the Zambian languages used for initial literacy
- Revisit the language policy to match current research findings in support of using MT not only as language for initial literacy but also as LoI in the early stages of school (Grades 1–4)
- Support for the production of reading materials in the children's mother tongues to enhance the reading culture
- Identifying possible ways of raising the social and economic status of the Zambian languages and culture in the area of entrepreneurship and apprenticeships. This is to be mainstreamed in the Teacher Training college curriculum. This would ensure that we do not just train teachers who will only look forward to be employed by the Ministry of Education but teachers who can run their own schools.

Language Policy in Norway

Minority languages in Norway fall in three main groups according to the political-administrative division of minorities: *indigenous minorities*, *national minorities* and *immigrant minorities*. However, we have a problem with exact statistics because neither in censuses nor in other official registrations of people living in Norway, there are questions asked about what language or languages the inhabitants use in their daily life. We also lack research that can give direct information on such matters. Therefore, indications of the number of minority language speakers must be estimated based on sources that primarily concern other topics than language use. In the following overview of language of education in Norway, we will exclude national minorities. The justification for this exclusion is that these groups have no legal right to mother tongue instruction. We will concentrate on the two major groups, the indigenous minorities – the Sami language group – and immigrant minorities. The overview is organised as follows: First we present the legal basis for choices of language in the two minority groups, and then we describe available materials for the screening of language skills and give an account of relevant curricula. Next comes an outline of statistical information on mother tongue instruction in Sami and immigrant languages and a section on teacher education. Finally we formulate some possible research questions.

Legal Considerations

Sami education in primary and lower secondary schools: There are nine Sami municipalities defined by law, all in Northern Norway. In these Sami districts all pupils have the right to education given in the Sami language. The municipality may issue regulations that everyone in primary and lower secondary schools in Sami districts shall receive instruction in Sami.

Sami pupils outside Sami districts have the right to instruction in Sami. When at least ten pupils in a municipality want instruction in Sami, the municipality must arrange for such instruction as long as there are at least six pupils remaining in the group. The municipality may decide to locate instruction in Sami to one or more schools in the municipality. The Ministry of Education may issue regulations concerning alternative forms of such instruction when instruction cannot be provided with appropriate teaching staff at school.

Sami upper secondary education: Sami people in upper secondary education have the right to instruction in Sami as a subject. The Ministry may issue regulations concerning alternative forms of such instruction when instruction cannot be provided with appropriate teaching staff at school. The Ministry may issue regulations that certain schools offer instruction in Sami or in specific Sami subjects in upper secondary education within certain courses or for certain groups. The county may otherwise provide such instruction.

Education for immigrant minorities is based on Laws pertaining to Primary and Secondary Education: Special language tuition for pupils from language minorities. Pupils in primary / secondary education with another mother tongue than Norwegian and Sami are entitled to

special tuition until they have sufficient skills in Norwegian to follow the ordinary teaching in schools. If necessary, these pupils also have the right to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject instruction or both. Mother tongue instruction may be located at another school than the one the pupil normally attends. When mother tongue instruction and bilingual subject instruction cannot be provided by appropriate teaching staff, the municipality/county should as far as possible provide for other instruction adapted to the pupils. Curricula are developed for Basic Norwegian for Language Minorities and for Mother Tongue Teaching for Language Minorities.

The municipality/county should map out what skills pupils have in Norwegian before a decision is made for special language tuition. Such monitoring should also be carried out along the way in education for pupils who have special language provisions, as a basis for assessing whether pupils have sufficient skills in Norwegian to follow the normal teaching in schools.

Screening Materials

Sami: There are no official screening materials provided for assessment of language skills in Sami, since all persons who consider themselves as Sami and either speak Sami at home or have at least one parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sami as home language have the right to education given in the Sami language.

Immigrant minorities: The pupils' language skills in their native language, in Norwegian, and possibly in other languages should be documented through «My Language Biography» in the screening material «Language Skills in Basic Norwegian», which is issued as a supplement to the Curriculum for Basic Norwegian for Language Minorities. This biography is developed by the bilingual language teacher and the Norwegian teacher in collaboration with the pupil. (From the Guide «Mother Tongue for linguistic minorities», p. 7).

There are screening tests with guidelines for bilingual teachers in 14 different mother tongues for grade two and three: Albanian, Arabic, Kurdish Badini/Kurmanci, Kurdish Soransese, Persian (farsi), Russian, Polish, Somali, Spanish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese.

For Grade Four and Five, a survey sample with teacher guidelines has been developed in three languages: Albanian, Somali, and Turkish.

Curriculum in Mother Tongue for Language Minorities

Sami: The Sami Parliament gives regulations on curricula for instruction in the Sami language in primary and secondary education. The regulations must lie within the scope and resource limits set by the Norwegian Ministry of Education. The Ministry issues regulations on other

specific curricula for primary education in Sami districts and for pupils who have otherwise Sami education in primary and secondary education. The Sami Parliament shall, in consultation with the Ministry, draft these regulations.

Immigrant minorities: A mother tongue education curriculum in the native language for linguistic minorities is a transition plan that shall be used only until the pupils can follow the instruction in the regular curriculum in Norwegian. The mother tongue curriculum is level-based, age-independent and applies to pupils of different ages and backgrounds. Before instruction begins, it must be considered on what level of the curriculum the instruction will be based for the individual pupil. The main purpose of the instruction is to enhance pupils' qualifications to master the Norwegian language and thus their learning opportunities through the development of basic reading and writing skills, vocabulary and conceptual understanding in their mother tongue. Intercultural understanding and development of linguistic self-assuredness and confidence are highlighted in mother tongue instruction. This may contribute to the development of a bilingual identity and a comparative perspective on Norwegian and the mother tongue. The instruction will further contribute to the development of effective learning strategies and insights in their own language learning.

In cases where the mother tongue is not a written language, this curriculum can still be used to support reading and writing in Norwegian. Instruction according to this plan will also help to increase pupils' general language skills in two languages, their meta-linguistic awareness and identity as a bilingual. It is structured in four main areas: Listening and speaking, reading and writing, language learning and language and culture. For each of these areas, there is a competence description at three levels. These levels are largely drawn on the basis of the first four levels in the European framework for language learning.

Statistics

What sources of information provide statistical information on how many pupils receive mother tongue instruction? What do these sources tell us?

Sami: Estimates about the total number of speakers of Sami as mother tongue or first language vary between 15,000 (Ethnologue) and more than 20,000 (Salminen, 1999). There are three main varieties of the language spoken in Norway: Northern Sami, Lule Sami and Southern Sami. The majority speak Northern Sami. The number of speakers of Lule Sami is estimated to approximately 500 (Todal, 1998). For Southern Sami, Salminen (1999) indicates that language is spoken as first language by a few hundred persons in Norway and Sweden altogether.

In 2008, there were altogether approximately 2500 pupils in primary and lower secondary education that received tuition in Sami or instruction in Sami as a subject. Of these, 940 had Sami as language of tuition. 102 additional students were instructed in Sami as first language, bringing the total number to 1,042, with 96% of these in Northern Sami. 1474 pupils took Sami as

second language, 91% Northern Sami (Statistics Norway, 2010). In upper secondary education in 2007, 285 pupils had Sami as a subject, practically all of whom had Northern Sami (Ministry of Labour, 2008).

Immigrant minorities: According to official statistics (Statistics Norway 2010), on January 1 2010, there were approximately 552 000 persons in Norway who either were born abroad themselves (approx. 459,000) or had foreign-born parents (93,000). They accounted for 11.4% of the population. There is reason to believe that the great majority of these persons are users of the language or the languages they themselves or their parents used in the country of origin. In addition, there are some 270,000 persons with so-called «other immigrant background», such as those with one Norwegian and one foreign-born parent, adopted abroad or persons born abroad of two Norwegian-born parents. Some of these will also be minority language users. So all in all we can estimate that somewhere between 600,000 and 650,000 persons living in Norway speak an immigrant language. Most of these do also speak Norwegian – to varying extent, according to their background and life situation.

On the basis of these numbers and our knowledge of the language situation in the countries we are talking about, we can estimate that there are somewhere around 50,000 speakers of Polish, 30,000 speakers of Urdu/Panjabi, and over 20,000 speakers of Somali, of German, of Danish, and of Arabic. Vietnamese and English have slightly fewer than 20,000 speakers each. Around 15,000 speak Bosnian, Farsi, Tamil or Turkish. And Russian, Thai, Tagalog, and Albanian comprise slightly more than 10,000 speakers (estimates based on Statistics Norway 2010).

As can be seen in the table below, there were nearly 614,000 pupils in primary and lower secondary education in 2009, and of these some 41,500 received special instruction in Norwegian («Norwegian for minorities»), while approximately 22,000 received mother tongue instruction and/or bilingual subject instruction. In upper secondary schools there were about 229,000 pupils, of whom 18,818 had an immigrant background (Rambøll Management, 2009).

Table 3: Pupils with special language education in Norwegian (primary and lower secondary schools).

Year	Total number Pupils	Bilingual subject/mother tongue instruction	Norwegian for minorities
1995	477236	11276	31113
2000	590471	18176	37342
2005	619640	20717	39963
2009	613928	22335	41544

Source: Norwegian Statistical Office, 2010.

There are large differences between districts when it comes to the size of the immigrant population. The capital, Oslo, has by far the greatest concentration as more than 20% of the inhabitants are either immigrants or are Norwegian born with immigrant parents and close to 40% of the pupils have an immigrant background (Oslo District School Board 2010). More than 100 different languages are registered.

There are variations between the districts with regard to the percentage of the minority language school children offered bilingual subject instruction, mother tongue instruction and/or Basic Norwegian for language minorities. We do not know the reason for that. For instance in Oslo, which has the largest group of language minorities, they offer only Norwegian as a common subject for all pupils independent of language background. They make no use of the curriculum in Basic Norwegian for language minorities, and to a very little extent mother tongue instruction.

Teacher Qualifications

Sami: Qualified teachers can be educated at the University of Tromsø and at Sami University College. Two other colleges in the northern part of Norway offer language courses, but not a full teacher education programme. There is a lack of qualified teachers. Sami University College has developed plans for a common teacher education for Northern Sami districts in Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia (Sami University College s.a.).

Immigrant minorities: The information is not sufficient when it comes to teacher qualifications and language teaching for minority groups. One source says that 21% of the mother tongue teachers are unqualified (Rambøll Mangement, 2008). Other sources claim that 45% of these teachers are unqualified (GIS). Some teacher education is presently offered for bilingual teachers. Hedmark University College is one of the institutions offering this educational programme.

Summary

- There are laws given to regulate languages in education for Sami pupils and for pupils of immigrant minorities.
- There are no official materials for assessment of language skills in Sami, whereas there are official screening materials for assessment of language skills in Norwegian for pupils of immigrant minorities.
- There are developed curricula for education given in the Sami language and for instruction in Sami as a subject, and for mother tongue instruction in the native languages for linguistic minorities as a transition plan.
- There are official sources giving information on the number of pupils receiving tuition in Sami or instruction in Sami as a subject, and also on pupils receiving bilingual subject instruction and/or instruction in mother tongue.
- There is a lack of qualified teachers in Sami as well as for mother tongue teachers for pupils of immigrant minorities.

Language Policy in Namibia

According to the Presidential Commission on Education, Culture and Training (2000:109), before Namibian Independence in 1990, the South African Government had deliberately used language as a means of dividing the population into language groups, thus preventing them

from uniting in opposition. The language skills that were taught to the majority of Namibians aimed to assist persons to cope at their work-place. Today we live in a world where distances have shrunk, and the global village is a reality. Therefore, after Independence in 1990, Namibia had to choose a language that would remove the isolation and which restricted the capacity to communicate with the outside world. The chosen language had to increase the capacity to produce literature and the chances of a fully literate community.

The new Namibian Government aimed at empowering the population for full participation in the democratic process through the introduction of a single national language, renewed status for mother tongues and the development of local languages. Since the government also wished Namibia to gain access to the international community, the decision was made to adopt English as the official language. In the words of former Prime Minister, Hage Geingob,

We had to choose a language that would open up the world to us. English was the obvious choice. After all, English is the most widely spoken language, spoken by some six hundred million people. There is no corner of the globe where you could not get by if you knew English. You could also get by in many countries if you knew French; but we cannot say that about most other languages. (Chamberlain, Diallo & John, 1981:12)

In 1991, after lengthy discussions in all regions of Namibia, a policy was agreed on, and was issued in the document *Education and Culture in Namibia: The Way Forward to 1996* (MBESC Discussion Document 2003). Among the criteria which were taken into consideration were that for pedagogical reasons, it is ideal for learners to study through their mother tongue, particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are acquired. The need for learners to be proficient enough in English, the official language, at the end of the seven-year primary school cycle in order to gain access to further education as well as to a language of wider communication was also highlighted.

In 1992, a specific language policy for schools was implemented, the goals of which included the following (Chamberlain & West, 1993):

- Promotion of a learner's own language and cultural identity through the use of home-language (mother tongue) instruction, at least at the lower primary level.
- Proficiency in English, the official language, by the end of the seven-year primary cycle.
- English as the medium of instruction beyond the lower primary level.

In the years following the implementation of this policy, a number of obstacles to the effective application of these principles became apparent, often resulting from practical problems and the reality experienced by parents and educators in the field. These include factors such as lack of human resources which «forced» some Grade 1–3 learners to be taught in another language which is not their mother tongue; a belief amongst parents that there are greater benefits for children to be taught through the medium of English, thus, they decisively enrolled their children in a school with English as medium of instruction for initial literacy; learners staying in areas where

their mother tongue was not offered as medium of instruction because of insufficient numbers of learners sharing the same mother tongue; or the school might have such a heterogeneous population that the learners speak too many different languages for one to be chosen as the medium of instruction, in which case English was often opted for as a way out. Another factor that seemed to aggravate the language policy implementation was the lack of confidence of primary and higher grade teachers in using or teaching English due to the fact that they had not been trained in English (Chamberlain 1993; Trewby, 1999; EMIS, 2006).

The Presidential Commission on Education Culture and Training (2000) also brought to light perceptions of their informants, which included teachers and parents. Some teachers felt that there was inequality in education due to the fact that English was used as the medium of instruction in the southern areas while in the northern areas mother tongue was used for the first three grades. Others indicated that the official language, rather than the local language should be used at the lower primary level so that learners could benefit from learning basic terminology in subjects at an early age. Parents believed that the instructional materials for the local languages may not be as good as those for English. They added that English-language competence was undermined by the use of mother-tongue instruction, as shown by the fact that Grade 4 learners performed so poorly.

Learners in Grade 4 cannot read, talk, or comprehend English. They lack the necessary vocabulary. The teacher cannot communicate with them and it forces him or her to explain in the mother tongue. There is a communication breakdown between teachers and learners due to the use of the vernacular as the medium of instruction. Learners are unable to express themselves in English while foreign teachers and teachers from other regions, on the other hand, cannot express themselves in the vernacular of that particular place.

Our environment does not create a conducive atmosphere for effective English learning. The basic competencies are not established well enough to implement a second language as a medium of instruction on a formal basis in Grade 4. It is a proven fact that youngsters who have not accomplished the basic competencies in their own mother tongue are unable to think and argue in another language. There is a very big gap which learners cannot overcome when starting fully fledged with English in Grade 4 for the first time. This causes poor results, frustration among learners and teachers, and an increase in the dropout rate. The emphasis on competence in English need not be detrimental to capacity in the mother tongue

(The Presidential Commission on Education Culture and Training, 2000:39)

In 2000, at the Conference on Language and Development in Southern Africa, problems being experienced with the Language Policy of Namibia were brought to light, and the recommendation was made that the policy be revised. This led to the publication and distribution in 2003 by the then Ministry of Basic Education and Culture of a Discussion Document, which included in its rationale amongst others that education in the mother tongue, especially in the lower primary

cycle of basic education, is crucial for concept formation as well as literacy and numeracy attainment. Furthermore it was argued that in order to be literate in a specific language, one should not only speak but also know the written language, as language is the system of human expression by means of words and effective communication requires the system to be fully functional. Recommendations made during the conference were followed, except for the proposal that mother tongue instruction should continue beyond Grade 3, which was rejected because of the financial implications.

The intention to promote the use of mother tongue is because mother tongue undoubtedly plays a crucial role in the acquisition of any second language. Moreover, there is a strong support in the literature that learners who are not taught in their mother tongue at lower grade level might have more difficulties to master reading skills and to performing well in school (Cummins, 2000; Harlech-Jones, 1998; Wolfaardt, 2004). On the contrary, there is also support for the idea of direct introduction into the language of wider communication (Bamgbose, 1991; Ramasamy, 2001). Some parents want their children to start with this language as early as possible in order for them to perform better in the language and because they believe more opportunities might exist in the language of wider communication (Murray, 2007).

Based on Ministry of Education statistics (EMIS, 2006) the following languages recorded at least 80% in having learners being taught in their mother tongue: English, German, Oshindonga, Rukwangali, Rumanyo, and Thimbukushu. The least used language as medium of instruction for mother tongue speakers is Ju/'hoasi which recorded only 7%. The Ministry further reported in this document that the closely related languages Ruciriku and Shishambyu were taught in the common medium of instruction Rumanyo, while the medium of instruction Ju/'hoasi grouped the San languages together although this means grouping very different languages together.

Table 4: Percentage of learners who receive instruction in their mother tongue per language group (Grade 1: 2005).

Language	Speakers	Educated in home language	Percent	Rank
Afrikaans	3784	2414	64	8
English	359	316	88	1
German	169	143	85	2
Khoekhoegowab	7489	3201	43	10
Oshikwanyama	14911	10524	71	6
Oshindonga	8132	6658	82	4
Otjiherero	4500	2142	48	9
Rukwangali	5094	4318	85	2
Rumanyo	1883	1556	83	3
Ju/'hoasi	1318	91	7	11
Setswana	197	84	43	10
Silozi	881	586	67	7
Thimbukushu	1281	1044	81	5

Summary

The Language Policy for schools in Namibia (Discussion Document, January 2003) states that Grade 1–3 will be taught either through the mother tongue or predominant local language. It is thus ideal for learners to study through their mother tongue, particularly in the early years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are acquired.

Grade 4 will be a transitional year when the change to English as medium of instruction must take place. However, learners should be proficient in English, the official language, at the end of the seven-year primary school.

English will be the medium of instruction beyond the lower primary level.

The Presidential Commission cites proposals that English should be the compulsory medium of instruction throughout Grades 1 to 12, with local languages being used parallel with English in Grades 1, 2 and 3, thus giving equal access to all learners (2000:41).

At the Conference on Language and Development in Southern Africa in 2000, it was suggested that mother tongue should be instructed beyond grade 3, however because of the financial implications this proposal was rejected in the Discussion Document that followed.

The Pilot Study

As was mentioned before, a pilot study was conducted in Zambia, Namibia and Norway during August and September 2011. The aim was to broadly explore the language of instruction situation and the challenges related to the language policy in each of these countries.

Methodology

The research for this pilot study was conducted during fall 2011. We employed the qualitative research design because it matched with the explorative nature of this pilot and the research objectives. In Zambia and Norway two primary schools were visited, in Namibia three primary schools were visited. When selecting the schools we looked at the location. The aim was to go to schools in different settlement areas. We interviewed teachers, school heads, pupils and parents about their views on language of initial literacy and language of instruction. In addition, in some schools class observations were conducted. See appendix 1 for the interview guide.

Findings

In this section we present the findings from the three pilots conducted in Zambia, Norway and Namibia.

The Zambian pilot

Two schools were visited and we interviewed teachers, school heads, pupils and parents. In addition, we conducted class observations for Grade four classes during a literacy period. One of the schools was a peri-urban school (Nyangwena) in a majority Soli speaking context while the language of play for children and the language for initial literacy is Chinyanja. In this school, all the pupils have instruction in English for other subjects but use Chinyanja during the literacy hour only. Teachers teach these pupils initial literacy using Chinyanja but not all of them are mother tongue speakers of Chinyanja themselves. Class observations showed that these teachers code switch and code mix to mitigate their own limitations in Chinyanja and those of most of their pupils whose mother tongues are not Chinyanja but any of the other Zambian languages, especially Soli, since the school is geographically located in the Soli speaking area. Similarly, pupils have to navigate themselves from Soli to Chinyanja all the time. One parent had this to say:

My child used to have a lot of problem when he started school. He had to change his ideas from Soli to Chinyanja all the time and we have no Soli books that we can use to help him once he is here at home so that he improves his reading.

Another parent had this to say on the use of Chinyanja as the familiar language to children whose mother tongue is Soli:

We see no problem with using Chinyanja to teach our children how to read but we would like to have books in Soli as well so that our children should also practice reading in Soli, their home language.

The second school was an urban school in Lusaka (Woodlands A). Most of the learners at this school are from the neighbouring shanty towns where several Zambian languages are spoken though Chinyanja is still the lingua franca and official Zambian language for the region. Notable languages spoken by many pupils in this school once they are home with parents are Chinyanja, Bemba, Tonga, Soli, Lenje, Lozi, Kaonde and many other Zambian languages. This goes to show that although Chinyanja is the language of play and used as the medium of instruction for initial literacy, it is not the mother tongue of many of the children.

Two Grade One and two Grade Four teachers were interviewed together with two head teachers. This was through purposeful sampling. Two Grade Four lessons in a target Zambian language were observed. Focus group discussions were conducted with parents of children in either Grade One or Four in the two sampled schools. There were six parents in each of the two focus groups conducted in the two schools.

Classroom instruction

It was observed that:

- All the teachers in the sample had some command of the target Zambian language (Chinyanja) but not trained to teach Chinyanja. Generally the Chinyanja they were using is the town dialect, which is different from the one in the books they were using.
- The lesson procedures were followed, though in some cases, the classes were too overcrowded to accommodate any activity.
- Some teachers were unable to teach the whole lesson in the target language because of their inadequacies in the target Zambian language. Because of lack of knowledge in bilingual teaching, teachers were not able to assist those pupils who could give an answer in a different language other than Chinyanja but a correct answer.
- Some teachers were also unable to teach the whole lesson in the target Zambian language (Chinyanja) because pupils had problems which required the teacher to code-switch and code-mix to facilitate learning. Code switching and code mixing resulted from the teachers' own limitations in Chinyanjs.

- In the observed lessons, a Zambian language lesson was prepared in English save for the examples. This is because in Teacher Training Colleges, Zambian language sessions are done in English and never in the Zambian languages. So they are trained in English how to teach Zambian languages.
- The pupil-teacher ratio is not the recommended one for a language class to support the effective implementation of the language of instruction policy.

Teaching and learning materials

- The teaching and learning materials (NBTL/SITE kits) were not enough, yet hard to improvise in some cases.
- Unlike in the teaching of English characterized with the use of video and language games (audio visual, radio, computers, DVD, etc), there were no teaching aids such as DVDs in the observed classes teaching Zambian languages.

School and classroom environment

- In one school, the class was too crowded (150 pupils in class) and the recommended pupil-centered methods and techniques could not be used.
- The teachers were said to be friendly and helped pupils with problems even though they themselves lacked adequate training in teaching the Zambian languages.

Parents' views

- Most parents were happy with the use of a familiar language with their children as languages for initial literacy but some expressed their concerns with teachers teaching these Zambian languages when they were not mother tongue speakers of Cinyanja themselves.
- Some parents proposed the production of reading materials in their languages though not used for initial literacy so that children practice reading in the home language once at home.
- It was made clear that parents were not part and parcel of the people who decided the languages to be used for initial literacy in Zambia, and neither were teachers.

Teacher preparation

- The findings revealed that many teachers who were trained to support the language policy by teaching NBLT/SITE/ROC were no longer in those schools and that the newly appointed teachers were not trained to teach initial literacy in Zambian languages
- The workshop-model of training on NBTL and SITE were said to be inadequate to prepare a teacher to effectively teach NBTL and SITE

Conclusion and recommendations

- The training of all teachers in a Zambian language is a must to support the language policy and promote the teaching of initial literacy in Zambian languages before children move to English. This includes those who are speakers of these languages and those who are not but teach these languages. They should all be trained in the teaching of these Zambian languages.
- Teacher training colleges should mainstream modern language teaching techniques used in the training of teachers in English to Zambian language training as well. There is a general belief that the Zambian languages are treated as inferior courses to English and those taking these courses are looked down upon by other students.
- There is need to develop reading and teaching materials in the Zambian languages to enhance their status and the promotion of a reading culture even in Zambian languages.
- The make the teaching of oral language teaching skills as part of the Teacher Training College curriculum so that all teachers coming out of these colleges have the necessary skills in teaching initial literacy using oral language teaching skills in those languages as a preparatory stage before pupils can start learning how to read and write in those languages.

The Norwegian pilot

In Norway two schools were visited and interviews conducted with mother tongue teachers, school principals and parents. In addition, observation was used as a method. At School One there are 23 learners with another mother tongue than Norwegian. The total number of learners is 275. The following languages are represented among the learners: Somali, Polish, Thai, Tigrinya/Amharic, Arabic, Chin, Swahili, Farsi. The second school is a small-town school with approximately 500 learners, about 15% are of linguistic minority background. 19 different languages are represented among the learners. Learners from 10 different languages qualify for Mother Tongue instruction. These languages are Arabic, Somali, Polish, Lithuanian, Russian, Vietnamese, Amharic, Tigrinya, Sorani and Gorani. For the four last languages mentioned, the school has not succeeded in getting teachers so no MT instruction is given in these languages.

Classroom instruction

- Norwegian is the language of instruction for all learners, but minority learners without sufficient language skills in Norwegian are given special instruction in basic Norwegian in a withdrawal group. For those who have MT instruction, 1–2 hours a week are offered as language support in the class or in a withdrawal group. This is normally given as personal language support in the class. Mother tongue lessons might also be given withdrawal from class.
- Language used for initial literacy education differs. It depends on the age of the learner and mother tongue. Normally it will be Norwegian and for those who start in Grade 1, Norwegian is normally the language of initial literacy. However, one Swahili teacher claimed that Swahili would be the initial literacy language.
- All newcomers are screened for language skills in Norwegian, their MT, English, and maths. The screening procedures vary between the two schools. At School Two, all newcomers are screened for language skills in Norwegian, their MT, English, and maths. There are several

tests used for this purpose. Some are from the national resource centre for multicultural matters (NAFO); some are from other schools with much experience with immigrant learners. At one of the school the local school authorities had compiled their own test. Interpreters take part when summoned. The school then recommend who must attend special classes in basic Norwegian and who will get mother tongue teaching in class or both. The municipality school authorities provide funds. The role of the parents is to sign a form to apply for mother tongue instruction. Some parents are reluctant to apply but they are few. The majority of the parents are happy to have mother tongue teaching offered for their children. It is the parents that have the final say concerning this matter.

Teacher qualifications

- 50 % of the teachers' mother tongue teachers are qualified teachers, whereas 50 % are unqualified teachers.
- One of the teachers at each school is educated as mother tongue teachers.
- Teaching and learning materials
- There are few learning materials and books for mother tongue teaching and for instance the Swahili the teacher is making learning materials.
- In Somali they have books and other learning material, but these must stay in school, and are not for the learners to take home.
- The Polish teachers brought school books and other reading material from Poland. It is quite common other MT teachers to bring learning materials from their countries of origin.
- The teachers also use available resources on the internet.
- The Arabic teacher translates material on her own.

Parents views

- Teachers were asked as to what parents' views were on the language of instruction?
- Few parents have up till now shown any opinion, according to the headmaster and mother tongue teachers.
- However, at School One, the Somali parents are complaining that their children are not being offered special classes in Somali as was the case before.
- Some Somali parents would like Somali to be the language of initial literacy. They will have special classes after school in addition to basic Norwegian.
- A few parents refuse to let their children have a mother tongue teacher. They argue that they are in Norway now and must speak Norwegian. These are mainly Polish parents and some are from the Balkans.
- Some parents also claim that the low quality of mother tongue teaching is the reason they refuse to accept it for their children.

Conclusion and recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving mother tongue instruction to all learners is a problem for the schools due to the large variation in languages represented by the immigrant learners. It is also a problem to find qualified teachers. Some parents have refused mother tongue education because of the low quality. Lack of qualified teachers in mother tongue is a problem. Mother tongue teachers are not employed only at one school. That means they may have a problem working closely with, for instance, the class teachers and the teachers teaching Norwegian.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A challenge mentioned by the school leader at School One is the lack of progress in getting immigrant learners fluent in Norwegian. Presently the progress is not good and they continue with mother tongue teachers throughout the whole primary and lower secondary school system. It is hard to tell if the problem is the quality of MT instruction or instruction in basic Norwegian.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to our informants the learners' outcomes are hampered by the lack of command of the Norwegian language. It is especially a problem for the Somali group according to the school leader at School One. She claimed that this was due to the fact that they were not well integrated in the community and that Norwegian was not spoken at home. This was not mentioned as a problem at School Two.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another problem is cultural barriers. That is, due to differences in culture it is difficult for many learners to get a full understanding of the subject content. For instance in social science this is a problem. This is a challenge that must be met by teacher education.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher education needs to incorporate intercultural understanding so the teachers in the classroom can attempt to bring together the learner's two worlds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our pilot shows that the aims of the mother tongue education curriculum in the native language for linguistic minorities, being a transition plan that shall be used only until the pupils can follow instructions in the regular curriculum in Norwegian, is difficult to meet.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both schools are following the screening procedures and thus, before instruction begins, it can be considered on what level the instruction will be based for each individual pupil.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea that the conceptual understanding in their mother tongue and intercultural understanding shall lead as a bridge to understanding of the Norwegian syllabus seems not to be fully met. This might be due to lack of qualified teachers, which is a major problem.

The Namibian pilot

Three schools were visited and we interviewed a total of 9 teachers, 3 school heads and 10 parents. In addition, we conducted class observations for Grade One and Four classes with the aim to determine the availability, quality and suitability of the materials available in these classes. One of the schools was an urban school, one a peri-urban school and the third was a rural school. In the urban school learners in Grades One to Three could opt between English and Afrikaans for their initial literacy education. It seemed that the option for English was more popular and when the two English classes available for Grade One were full, learners had to be placed in the Afrikaans stream where there were also two classes available. It seems that the choice for Afrikaans as one of the two languages of initial literacy was mainly historically determined. Before Independence most people living close to this school were Afrikaans speaking and although the situation changed substantially since that time, Afrikaans remained as the alternative to English in the school.

In both the peri-urban and rural schools the language for initial literacy was Khoekhoegowab. It was reported that the Ministry decided based on the language policy, what the language for initial literacy would be. However it was pointed out that teachers as well as parents made inputs within policy provisions, as to the choice of language to be offered in the school.

Teaching and learning materials

Two Grade One classes and two Grade Four classes in the urban school were visited. Only the basic classroom set-up and materials were observed and no specific lessons.

The children in grade one classes sat in groups of 4 to 6. They were well behaved but free and open. Most text books were available for each child. Some books were only enough for 50% of the class and therefore 2 children had to share a book during class. All books remained in the class and learners thus did not have any books to take home. For some lessons and topics teachers made photo copies due to a lack of books. Books were in a good condition. Several posters, pictures and other aids were available. Most of these were made by the teacher or bought from her own pocket.

Grade Four classes were very old and hot in summer and cold in winter since it is prefabricated (asbestos with sink roofs). In the Grade Four classes there were enough text books for one group of learners. Learners could not take books home since the next group also had to use the books. However, during class each learner had his or her own book to use and did not have to share. Teachers evaluated the availability of text books as good. Each class had a reading corner but this was very limited and contained mainly English books. Several learning materials were displayed on the walls. The Ministry provides a list of compulsory materials to be displayed and these are checked (e.g. months of the year, numbers, conversion table etc). These materials are also mostly made by teachers or bought from their own pockets. These displays were found to be in quite good condition and interesting and creative.

Parents' views

Parents were aware of the policy as laid down by the Ministry of Education with regard to initial literacy and the language of instruction in the schools. In the urban school where English could be chosen for initial literacy, the parents were happy with the arrangement. Reasons were that English was the official language. They felt it was the parents' duty to maintain the MT and they did not fear that the MT would «fade away since it came natural». One parent also said she struggled too much in her own life because she could not speak English. In the peri-urban school where the language for initial literacy was Khoekhoegowab the parents were not happy with the arrangement. They indicated that the other languages had little value and the dominant language for the country was English.

In all schools it seemed that parents were in favour of having English for both initial literacy and the language of instruction. The reasons given were that since there were so many languages, English served to unify the different language groups. English could be used for communication with any person anywhere, whereas local languages limited communication. Parents were happy to have the MT as a school subject only so that learners did not lose it as they grew older.

Teachers' and school heads' views

The views of teachers in the urban schools were that the policy was good but difficult to implementation due to the multicultural context of the country. They were also of the opinion that learners struggled to learn concepts in English if they did not have an opportunity to learn these in the MT from Grades 1 to 4. They were in favour that the child should be taught in MT from Grade 1 to 4. The views of teachers in the peri-urban schools were that the Mother Tongue should continue up to Grade 6 or 7. Teachers also felt that schools should take responsibility for implementing the Language Policy.

In two of the three schools the heads were positive about the language policy. However some were concerned about the teachers' low proficiency in English. The 3rd principal did not support the language policy and preferred learners to be taught in English from Grade 1. His reason for this was that the teaching materials in Khoekhoegowab were too difficult to be used for literacy education.

Conclusion and recommendations

- Most teachers were in favour of MT instruction during the first three grades and some even suggested this to continue up to Grade 6 or 7. However, the research revealed that parents in general preferred that their children have initial literacy education in English. It is therefore recommended that parents be informed about the benefits of MT instruction during the first grades to ensure a strong foundation for reading and concept development.
- Some school heads were concerned about the language proficiency of teachers. The Ministry of Education is presently in the process to investigate this issue and have plans to upgrade the English proficiency of all teachers. The proficiency in the language used for initial literacy should be of high quality, and this matter thus also needs to be evaluated and improved where needed.

Discussion of findings and recommendations

The objective was to explore broadly the language of instruction situation and possible challenges in specific schools. More specific, the main objective was the different language policies of education: Implementation, practise and learning outcomes in Zambia, Namibia and Norway.

The language policy differs substantially between the three countries. In Zambia the language of instruction is English from grade 1. However, since the new education act in 1996 the language for initial literacy is one of seven official Zambian languages. The latter is offered only for initial literacy during the daily literacy hour. The rest of the subjects in schools are taught in English throughout the education system. In Norway there is a different language policy for immigrant minorities and for indigenous population, the Sami people. The latter has Sami as language of instruction and as language for initial literacy in primary and lower secondary schools. For immigrant minorities Norwegian is the language of instruction and also the language of initial literacy. However, they are entitled to special tuition and some mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject instruction or both. In Namibia the language of instruction and language of initial literacy is mother tongue at the lower primary level. English is the official language; and it is introduced as a subject in lower primary. Grade 4 is seen as a transitional year after which English is the medium of instruction for all subjects.

Even though the language policies differ some of the challenges are the same. The main problems are that learners cannot read, talk or comprehend the official language on an acceptable level and many learners are functionally illiterate. Two fundamental questions might be asked: Is it the language policy that is wrong or is it the implementation of the language policy that is imperfect?

Our pilot discovered challenges in implementation of the language policy. In Zambia they find that some language teachers are not trained in teaching literacy in the local African language. The seven Zambian languages used as the languages for initial literacy were not screened to find out if they were really the languages of play for children but were merely zoned based on the lingua franca in the provinces of the country. The posting of teachers to these provinces has also posed a challenge in Zambia. Some teachers are posted to provinces that use a different Zambian language for literacy than the mother tongue of the teacher. In such situations such teachers meet a huge challenge of teaching literacy in a language they do not know. Such teachers just worsen the situation of those children who are also learning initial literacy not in their mother tongues. In such situation the teacher together with her/his pupils is a stranger to the language used for initial literacy. The lessons produced by such teachers are, therefore, not good. In addition to this the some teachers also lacked knowledge in bilingual teaching and were not able to assist learners

sufficiently. In Namibia the implementation of the language policy caused some problems. Some schools had several languages as MT which made it difficult to select a specific language for initial literacy. This led to the fact that some schools then opted for English since this is the official language and it is seen as the «neutral» choice even though very few learners have this as their MT. In other schools, where learners had the same MT, some teachers felt the materials in the MT were not sufficiently developed for teaching literacy skills. Some school heads were concerned about the teachers' proficiency in the languages used for initial literacy, as well as their proficiency in English. As is the case with the other two countries, Norway also lacks qualified teachers in teaching literacy in the mother tongue in schools.

Most parents were supporting the language policy for initial literacy in Zambia. But some parents expressed their concern with teachers teaching these languages when they were not fluent in the language themselves. In all schools in Namibia it seemed that parents were in favour of having English for both initial literacy and the language of instruction. The reasons given were that since there were so many languages, English served to unify the different language groups. English could be used for communication with any person anywhere, whereas local languages limited communication. Parents were happy to have the MT as a school subject only so that learners did not lose it as they grew older. However, most teachers were in favour of MT instruction during the first three grades and some even suggested this to continue up to Grade 6 or 7. In Norway some parents supported the language policy whereas others wanted their children to be thought in mother tongue as the language of initial literacy.

Other problems in Zambia include the lack of teaching material in African languages and the pupil-teacher ratio which leads to overcrowded classes. The end result is low reading levels and the majority of pupils not breaking through to literacy throughout their primary school education. In Namibia each class had a reading corner but this was very limited and contained mainly English books. Several learning materials were displayed on the walls but all these materials had to be made or bought from the teacher's own pocket. Norway also reported a lack of materials in the different mother tongues.

From this pilot it thus became clear that lack of qualified teachers, especially teachers teaching initial literacy seems to be a common problem in all three countries. The strengthening of teacher training in the languages of initial literacy is thus of utmost importance in all three countries. Teacher training institutions should mainstream modern language teaching techniques used in the training of the official languages to language training of languages of initial literacy as well. Teacher education also needs to incorporate intercultural understanding to a larger extent so that the teacher in the classroom will be able to bring together the learner's two worlds. Lack of adequate learning materials specifically in the languages of initial literacy is another problem. Materials in these languages need to be developed and provided to schools. All materials should fulfil the required standards to ensure quality teaching in the different languages.

One must also look closer at the national language policies – how appropriate is the present policy and how effectively can it be implemented? We thus propose that the three countries should focus on the aspects as illustrated in figure 1 below:

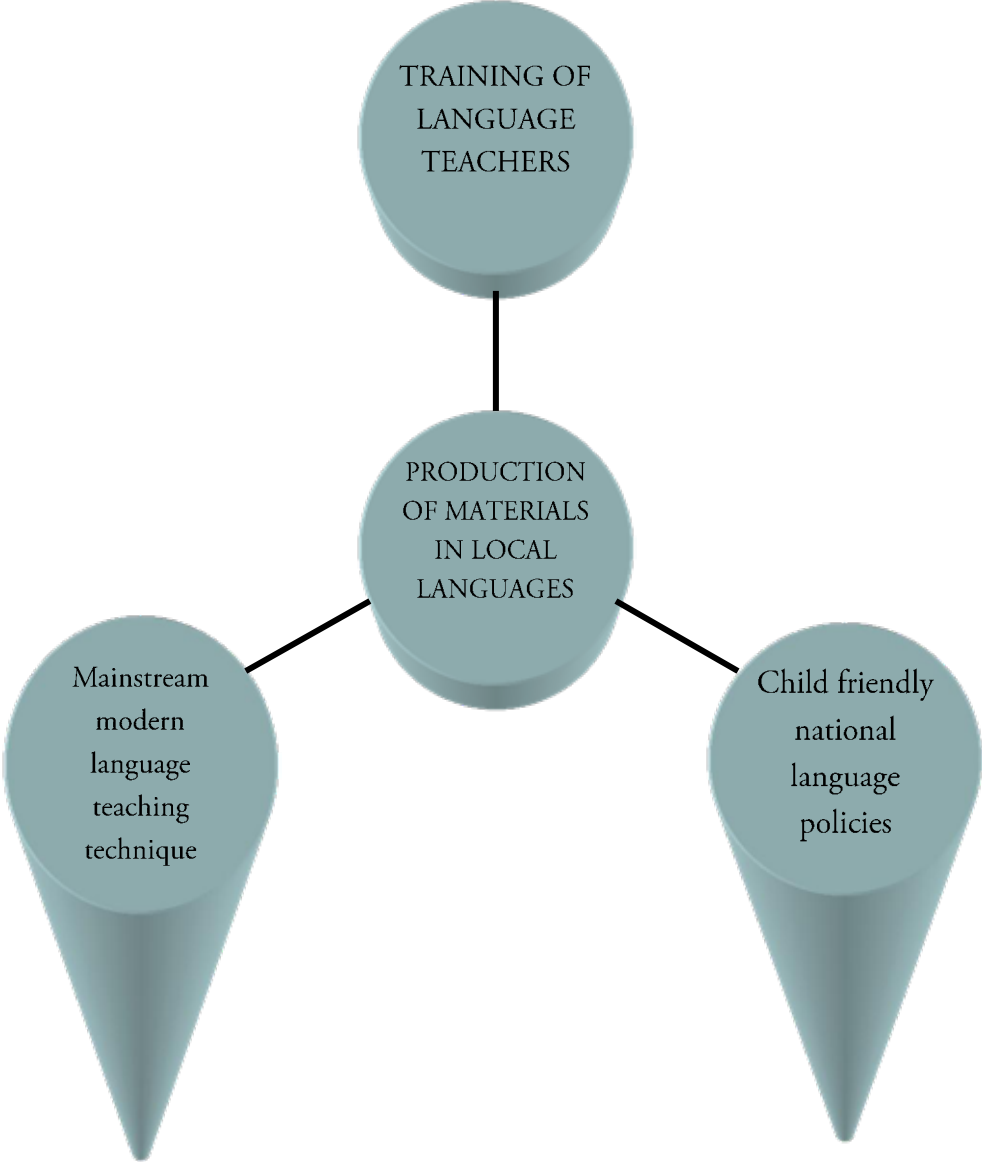


Figure 1: Focus areas to improve the literacy levels of learners in schools

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Appendix 1: The interview guide

Research themes

- Implementation of language policy
 - What languages are used as medium of instruction in grade 1
 - What language used initial literacy?
 - When and how is English/Norwegian introduced?
 - Who decide of what language is offered?
 - What are the learners' MT

- Qualification of teachers
 - Educational level of the teachers
 - Status and quality of teacher training for MT teaching
 - Education background for teaching English as a second language

- Availability and quality of learning material
- Learners outcome
- Parents view of policy and implementation
 - What are the parents' view of language of instruction?
 - What are the parents' view of language for initial literacy?
 - What are the parents' view of the language choice offered
 - Parents view of MT status